

## "Measure is vital piece of puzzle"

Funding the transportation needs for our region is one of my highest priorities in Congress and I am a strong supporter of Solano County's half-cent sales transportation tax Measure H. As the San Francisco Bay Area's senior member serving on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I am dedicated to supporting proposals that responsibly increase the funding needed to reduce the traffic woes that plague one of the most gridlocked regions in the nation.

Supporting Measure H is our opportunity to create a local source of funding to fix our local roads, our freeways and work to provide safe routes to school for our children. Our state's well-documented financial woes have put a squeeze on the local budgets of our cities and counties, drastically decreasing the needed funding to fix and improve our highways. Only through raising local transportation funds through a half-cent sales tax will we address this shortfall. Raising local funds will make us as a "self-help county," allowing us to leverage state and federal matching funds to complete major projects like the interchange at Interstate 80 and I-680.

The responsibility to invest in our most important infrastructure is all of ours. That's why we need partnerships at the local, county, state and federal levels to raise the funds necessary to address our most pressing transportation needs.

Some have suggested that these federal matching funds are essentially nonexistent, and as such, the region shouldn't bother to generate any of our own funding as it would inevitably prove inadequate. That is just plain wrong. The truth is that in collaboration with Rep. George

Miller, D-Solano, I was able to secure \$17.48 million to upgrade and reconstruct the interchange at I-80, I-680 and state Highway 12. This was part of a Federal Highway Bill that I worked aggressively to pass in Congress, which will bring back to California more than \$23 billion in highway and transit projects through 2009, a 40 percent average annual increase in federal transportation funding to the state. Included in this total is \$72.5 million, which will go directly toward addressing the transportation needs of the California's 10th Congressional District. Currently, that project in Cordelia alone has \$154 million in regional, state, and federal funds already committed.

Measure H puts the region on the right path to achieving many of the transportation goals that our communities have set in the last few years. The massive number of cars, buses and trucks that utilize the region's roadways are far exceeding capacity. This commuter gridlock is diminishing our quality of life. Traffic shouldn't cause us to miss our child's soccer games, make a trip to the grocery store seem like a cross-country adventure or make us fear that our children won't get to school safely. Measure H will take the necessary steps to relieve our most pressing concerns quickly and effectively and as soon as possible.

Since the measure incorporated community input from the beginning, it will go above and beyond widening lanes and address the concerns that all of us have in our own neighborhoods. It makes a commitment to improving safety at high accident locations, will begin to provide safer routes to schools and will get high priority local projects off the ground. Additionally, it will benefit transit projects that get cars off of our highways resulting in less congestion and better air quality.

We cannot succumb to the defeatist attitude that this is just another tax hike that will never reap any regional benefits. Every county in the Greater Bay Area - except Napa and Solano counties - has passed a county transportation sales tax and are now seeing shovels in the ground on projects that will significantly improve the mobility of their counties. As a region, we have always placed a high priority on the need for the effective and reasonable transportation options; this is one of those options.

We must realize that a measure of this magnitude with its many implications for the future can only be accomplished if we all work together. For a better, safer, and more mobile Solano County, I ask for your support of Measure H.

• The author is the Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives representing California's 10 District, which includes portions of Solano County.